



NOVA P A R K S

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

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DATE: September 22, 2017
TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Stella Koch, NOVA Parks Chairwoman *S.K.*
RE: Recommendation for City Park & Recreation Commission

NOVA Parks would like to respond to the recent recommendation from the Alexandria Park & Recreation Commission related to the future of Cameron Run. While we acknowledge some of their conclusions about Alexandria's unmet recreation needs, we disagree with other conclusions and are disappointed by the overall involvement afforded to NOVA Parks in the process as well as the characterization of NOVA Parks.

In the second survey Michael Baker did as part of this process, the largest group (42%) wanted some version of the park that included the current waterpark. The other respondents were fractured among a number of other uses none of which got over 25%. In a professionally conducted survey the City contracted for in 2014, 55% of City residents responded that someone from their household had visited Cameron Run in the last 2 years. This makes Cameron Run the most popular recreational facility in the City.

The Commission's recommendations appear to reflect the opinion they have had for the last 5 years. Their position, is that City staff should take over Cameron Run, and that a large, probably indoor recreation facility should be constructed on the site. Since there is no consensus on what this alternative facility might be, and it would presumably need to be funded out of City capital, it is essentially "a plan to make a plan." The findings and recommendations also fail to acknowledge the individual proposals that NOVA Parks and the Eisenhower Partnership submitted, offering a shorter lease extension coupled with efforts to accommodate more creative off-season needs such as those expressed in point 21 of the Commission's recommendation.

NOVA Parks made every possible effort to engage in this process productively. We proposed a plan of continual investment and improvement in Cameron that we called the Blue and Green Plan. Our efforts were not reflected in the Michael Baker report or the Commission recommendations. The Eisenhower Partnership has also developed and proposed a plan for Cameron in the last two months. Their plan would also offer a future of continued investments and development of Cameron Run, and it appears their plan was not considered or mentioned in their report to you.

City of Alexandria
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Arlington County
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City of Fairfax
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City of Falls Church
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I hope you can see from our actions that NOVA Parks continues to stand with the City looking for productive options. Over a year ago, we offered to purchase 517 Prince Street and operate that historic site. This year, we have participated in the process, to the extent we were invited, and offered a range of practical and beneficial improvements through the Blue and Green Plan. This last summer we found a corporate sponsor to allow 1,000 children in City-run summer camps to go to Cameron Run free. We have considered numerous other options for improvements or year-round use and have offered the ones that we found to be feasible.

Our current lease expires on June 30, 2021. In light of this, we suggest that we keep working at finding a solution that meets City needs and the public interest. We acknowledge the City's current and long-term needs for recreation and value the City's membership in our regional mission of providing recreational opportunities to your citizens beyond your City limits. We are still open to discussing a wide range of options to provide services in your City. This includes but is not limited to, a shorter lease that would allow the City to plan for longer term needs and would allow NOVA Parks to continue operation of a highly used waterpark, with additional off-season recreational opportunities, until the City can establish and fund its goal for long-term needs. We look forward to working with the City on solutions and to discussing our mission and the benefits that we provide to the region.